MARVEL
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MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS
WOLVERINE
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AUTHORITY
SHARK BAIT!
PLUS 3 MORE ALL-NEW FEATURES!

MARVEL® COMICS PRESENTS™

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WONDER MAN "STARDUST MISERIES" 9
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HERCULES "ALL IN THE FAMILY" 17
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FREEDOM FORCE 25
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"CHINA BEACH HEAD" — PART 4 OF 10

Two creatures: Black Shadow and White Shadow are about to battle each other. Between them lies an unconscious Wolverine.

The two Shadows clash then suddenly vanish. Wolverine, Mai, Hsiao, and Ch'un realize the only way to destroy the Shadows is at their place of origin: China.

"WITH A VENGEANCE" — PART 4 OF 8

The Beast lies near death, and WONDER MAN is responsible — or is he? They say behind every man there is a woman — and Iron Man intends to find out who she is!!

"LONG LIVE THE KING" — PART 3 OF 3

The Emperor Mother's evil scheme has backfired. The Assassin's Guild has been defeated, but not without a heavy price. Absorbing a blast meant to destroy Hercules, the son of Hercules now hovers on the brink of death.

"FORCED FED!"

The shape-shifting Mystique! The earth-moving Avalanche! The flame-wielding Pyro! The immensely immovable Blob! Once they were feared and hated as the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. Pragmatist that she is, Mystique realized the growing anti-mutant hysteria made the United States a dangerous place to hide. Reluctantly working toward a presidential pardon, these villains-turned-federal-agents have become, for better or for worse, Freedom Force!

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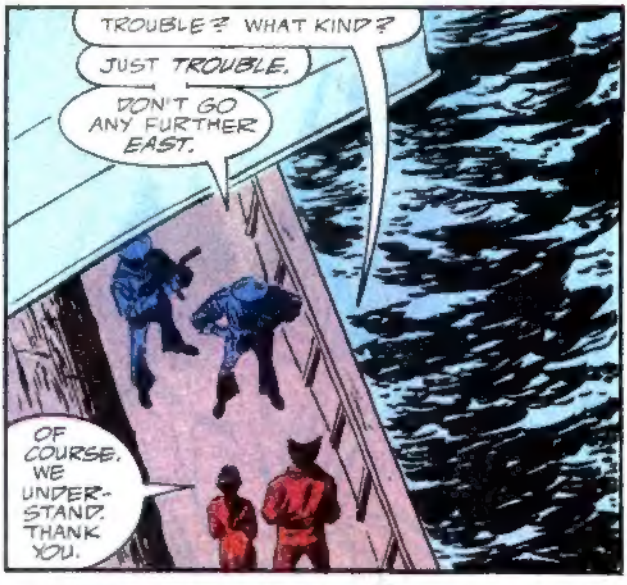
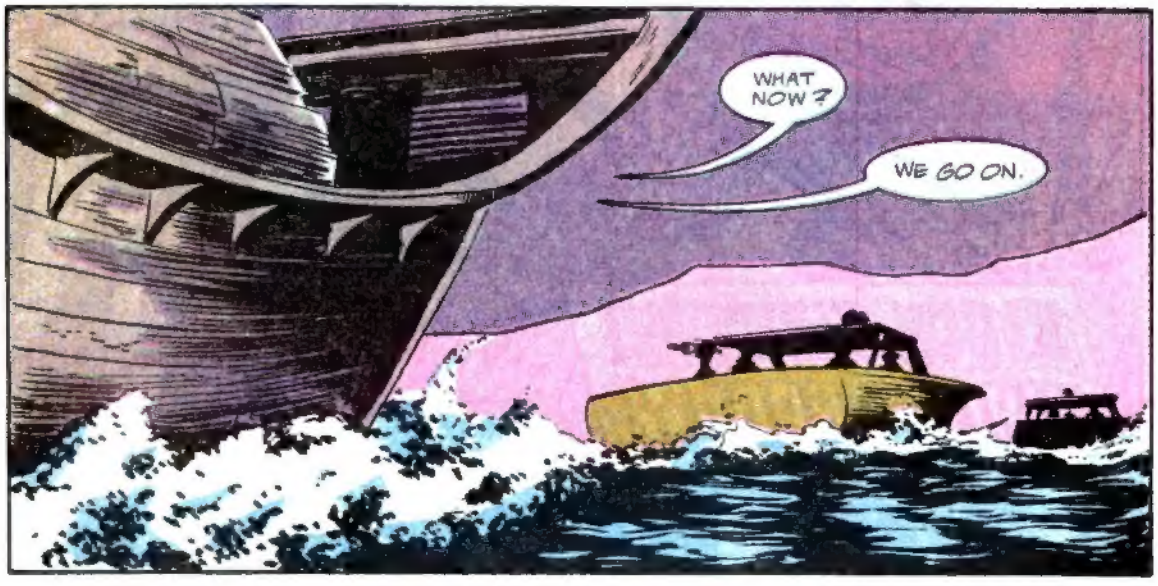
WE'D LEFT VICTORIA HARBOR AN' SAILED EAST OUT OF HONG KONG ALONG THE HUNGSHUI.
YOU COULD HEAR THE HARBOR MUSIC FADIN' BEHIND US.
WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE WERE THE SIRENS THAT REPLACED IT.
LOWER YOUR SAILS, HARBOR POLICE.
WE'RE COMING ABOARD!
WE'RE JUST OUT HERE CRUISIN'.
NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT.
TWO THIRTY IN THE MORNING?
STEP ASIDE. WE'RE BOARDING.
BLACK SHADOW! WHITE SHADOW!
PART II
FEATURING...
WOLVERINE
CHINA BEACHHEAD

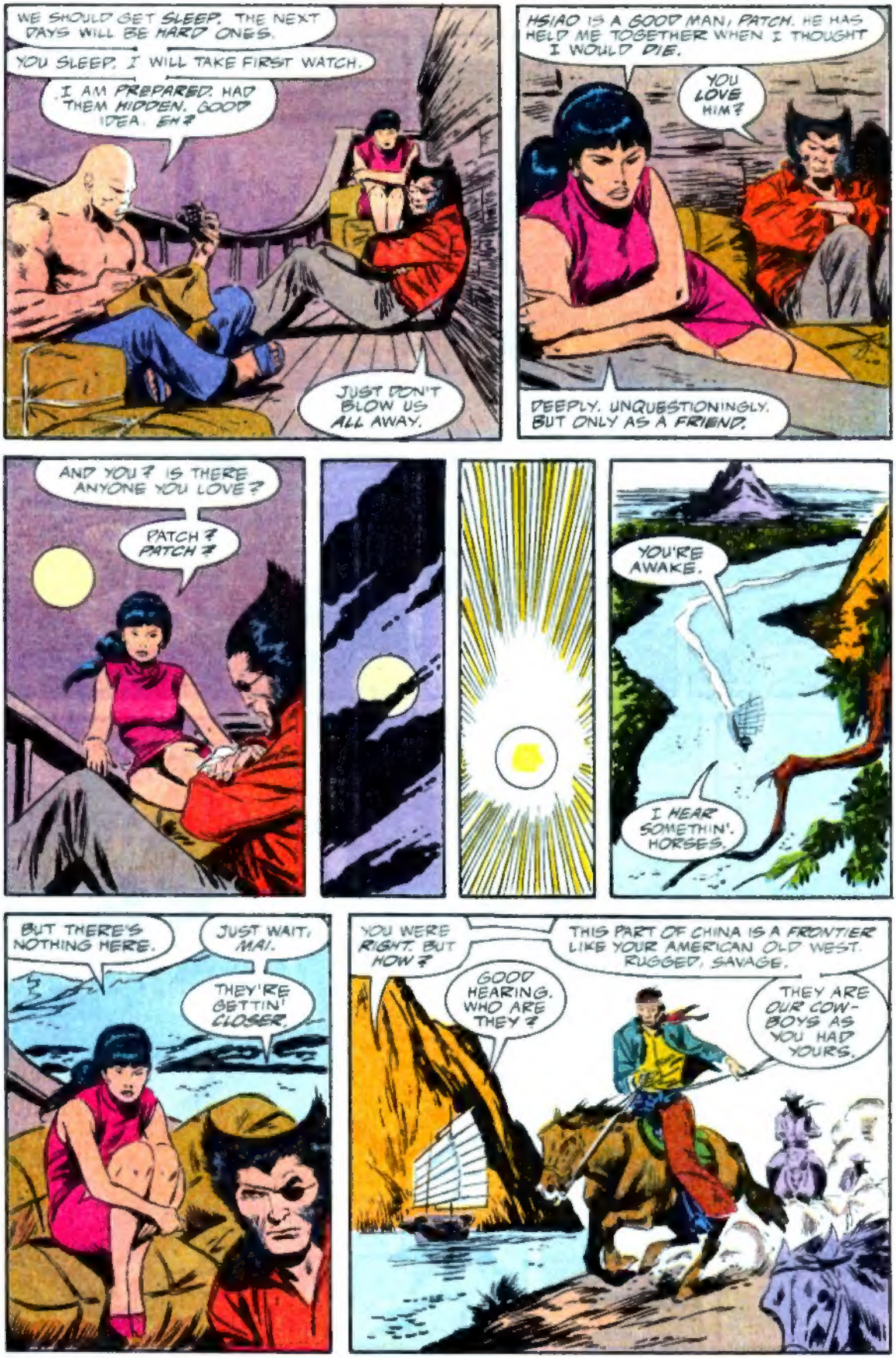
OFFICER, WE HAVE FISHING PERMITS,
I CAN SHOW THEM TO YOU.
DON'T DOUBT IT.
BUT WE'RE STILL LOOKING AROUND.

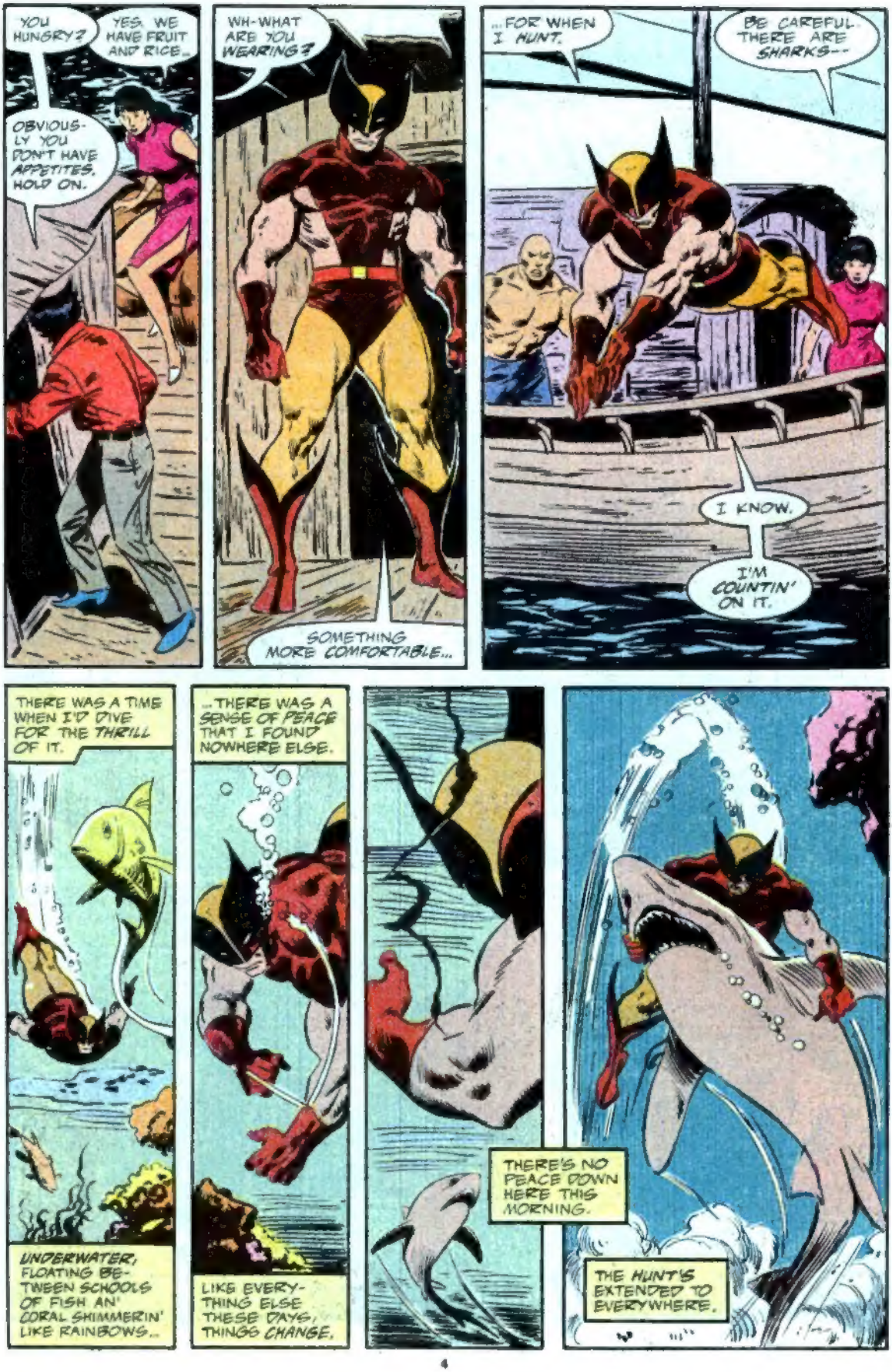
YOU'RE A FISHERMAN?
NAH.
CANADIAN.
THIS IS PART OF "THE HARBORS OF THE WORLD" TOUR, ISN'T IT?

SIR, NO WEAPONS ON BOARD. THEY SEEM TO BE WHAT THEY SAY THEY ARE.
ALL RIGHT, MOVE ALONG THEN.
BUT, BE CAREFUL. THERE'S SOME TROUBLE ALONG THE CHINESE BORDER.


TROUBLE? WHAT KIND?
JUST TROUBLE.
DON'T GO ANY FURTHER EAST.
OF COURSE, WE UNDERSTAND. THANK YOU.


WHAT NOW?
WE GO ON.


WE SHOULD GET SLEEP. THE NEXT DAYS WILL BE HARD ONES.
YOU SLEEP. I WILL TAKE FIRST WATCH.
I AM PREPARED. HAD THEM HIDDEN. GOOD IDEA. EH?
JUST DON'T BLOW US ALL AWAY.
HSIAO IS A GOOD MAN, PATCH. HE HAS HELD ME TOGETHER WHEN I THOUGHT I WOULD DIE.
YOU LOVE HIM?
DEEPLY. UNQUESTIONINGLY. BUT ONLY AS A FRIEND.
AND YOU? IS THERE ANYONE YOU LOVE?
PATCH? PATCH?
YOU'RE AWAKE.
I HEAR SOMETHIN'. HORSES.
BUT THERE'S NOTHING HERE.
JUST WAIT, MAI.
THEY'RE GETTIN' CLOSER.
YOU WERE RIGHT. BUT HOW?
GOOD HEARING. WHO ARE THEY?
THIS PART OF CHINA IS A FRONTIER LIKE YOUR AMERICAN OLD WEST. RUGGED, SAVAGE.
THEY ARE OUR COW-BOYS AS YOU HAD YOURS.


YOU HUNGRY?
YES. WE HAVE FRUIT AND RICE...
OBVIOUSLY YOU DON'T HAVE APPETITES. HOLD ON.
WH-WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?
SOMETHING MORE COMFORTABLE...
...FOR WHEN I HUNT.
BE CAREFUL THERE ARE SHARKS--
I KNOW.
I'M COUNTIN' ON IT.
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I'D DIVE FOR THE THRILL OF IT.
UNDERWATER, FLOATING BE-TWEEN SCHOOLS OF FISH AN' CORAL SHIMMERIN' LIKE RAINBOWS...
...THERE WAS A SENSE OF PEACE THAT I FOUND NOWHERE ELSE.
LIKE EVERY-THING ELSE THESE DAYS, THINGS CHANGE.
THERE'S NO PEACE DOWN HERE THIS MORNING.
THE HUNT'S EXTENDED TO EVERYWHERE.

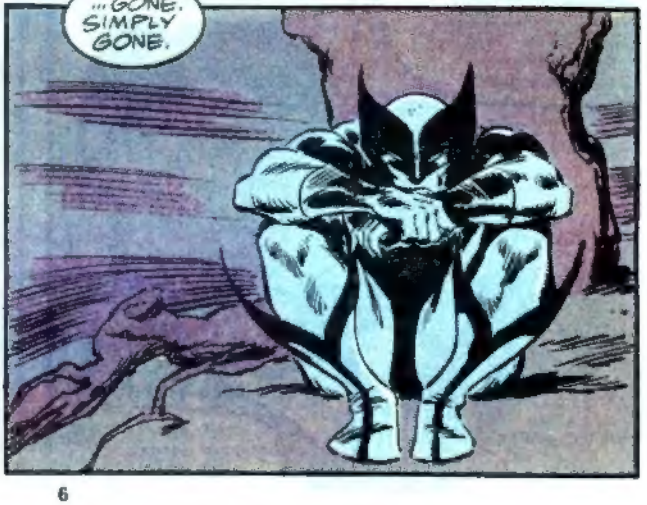
IT WAS ONE PREDATOR AGAINST ANOTHER -- THE SHARK'S MULTI-LEVELED JAWS AGAINST MY ADAMANTIUM CLAWS.
IT NEVER STOOD A CHANCE.
BREAK-FAST'S UP.
I KNOW IT'S JAPANESE, BUT I HOPE YOU GUYS LIKE SUSHI.
WE KNOW BETTER THAN TO ASK QUESTIONS.
SO WE MERELY GIVE YOU OUR THANKS.
HAVE YOU BEEN TO CHINA BEFORE?
COUPLE TIMES.
IT IS A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY, FILLED WITH MANY DIFFERENCES.
CH'UN WAS BORN IN THE CITY, I IN THE COUNTRY. BOTH IN CHINA, BUT WE SPOKE DIFFERENT DIALECTS, ALMOST DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.
WE HAVE THE MOST MAGNIFICENT MOUNTAINS, AND THE MOST BARREN DESERTS.
OUR CITIES ARE BOTH MODERN AND ANCIENT.
WE DO WHAT WE MUST, BUT WE HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN WE ARE NOT EQUIPPED FOR WHAT WE MUST FACE.
YOU OFFER US HOPE.
NO. YOU HAD HOPE.
ALL I'VE GOT IS AN EXTRA PAIR OF HANDS.

NO, MY FRIEND PATCH--YOU ARE FAR MORE THAN THAT. BUT, AS I SAID, I WILL NOT PRY.
FOR WHATEVER THE REASON, OUR SECRETS MUST BE PRESERVED.
AH, I AM SORRY TO GO ON, BUT I AM USED TO PHILOSOPHIZING. I WAS A TEACHER BEFORE...
...BEFORE...

CALM YOURSELF, MY FRIEND. CH'UN WAS A TEACHER BEFORE THE BLACK SHADOW SWEPT THROUGH HIS SCHOOL--
--AND MURDERED MORE THAN HALF HIS STUDENTS. BUT THEN WE HAVE ALL SUFFERED.
BECAUSE OF THE BLACK SHADOW, MY FARM IS SCORCHED AND BARREN; MY GRANDPARENTS DEAD.
BUT LIKE STEEL FORGED HARDER IN FIRE, WE HAVE BECOME STRONGER AND TOUGHER BECAUSE OF THIS.

MAI, YOU CANNOT DENY WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU.
TELL HIM. IT WILL HELP YOU AS WELL.
IT GIVES ME PAIN TO THINK ABOUT IT.
AND THE PAIN WILL GIVE YOU THE STRENGTH TO GO ON.

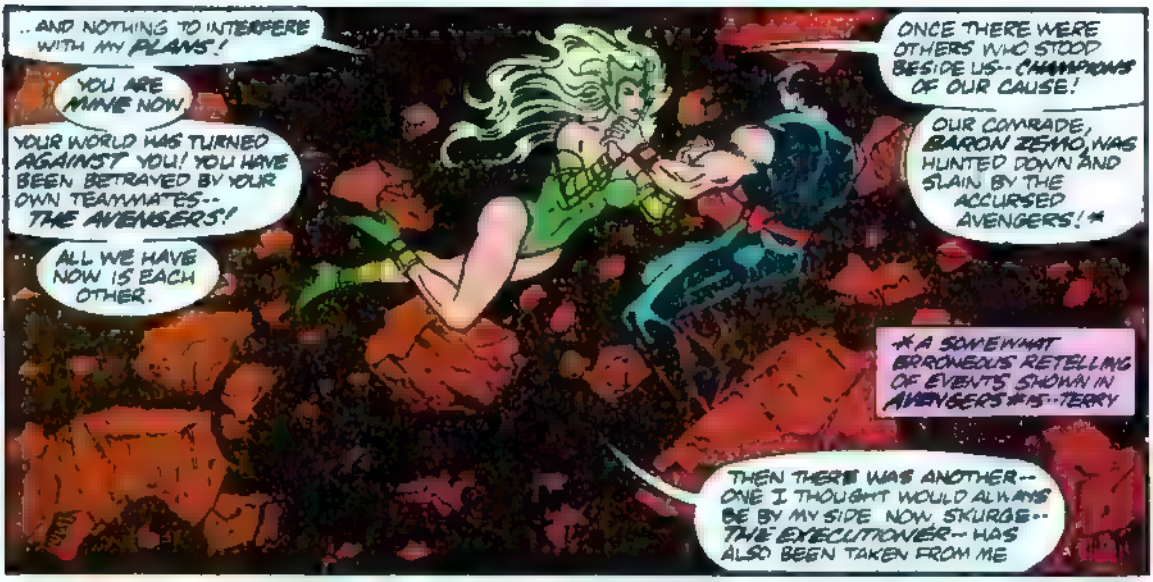
I SAW MY HUSBAND KILLED BY THE BLACK SHADOW. AND I SAW...
...AND THEN I SAW MY BABY. ONE MOMENT SHE WAS AT MY SIDE--
--AT MY SIDE COOING AND SWEET. THEN SHE WAS...

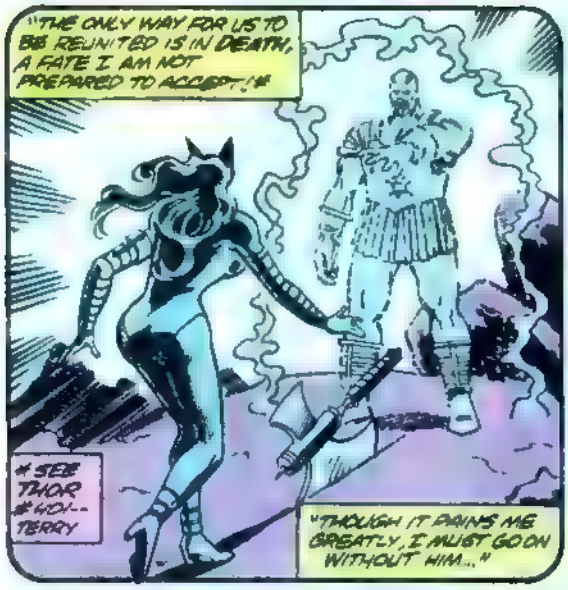

...GONE. SIMPLY GONE.

WE STOOD BY A RIDGE OVERLOOKIN' A RIVER THAT WAS COLD AND GRAY.
SHE STOOD MAYBE TEN MINUTES BEFORE SHE COULD TALK.
I WORKED IN THE HOSPITAL. CLEANING, TAKING CARE OF OLD MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAD BECOME INFIRM WITH AGE.
WHY IS IT WHEN WE GROW OLD AND ARE AT OUR WISEST MUST THE BODY FAIL US SO?
I WAS THERE WHEN HE CAME TO US.
THERE WAS AN EVIL ABOUT HIM. HE SEEMED COLD AND DARK, YET WE PERMITTED HIM ENTRANCE.
WHO--?
THE ONE WHO BECAME BLACK SHADOW. THE BLACK SHADOW THAT FIRST WE HUNTED...
...AND WHO NOW HUNTS US.
HE ENTERS VILLAGES AND DESTROYS THEM.
HOLD ON. SOMETHIN'S COMIN' OUR WAY.
I--I DO NOT HEAR ANYTHING.
SMELL IT THEN, MAI.
SMELL IT!

YOU STAY HERE.
WHAT OF THE DANGER?!
I'LL COPE.
BIG WORDS.
I TURNED A CORNER OVER A HILL AND SAW THEM TRAMPLING RIGHT AT ME. DOZENS OF THEM--
--WITH NO WAY TO GET OUT OF THEIR WAY.
CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE...

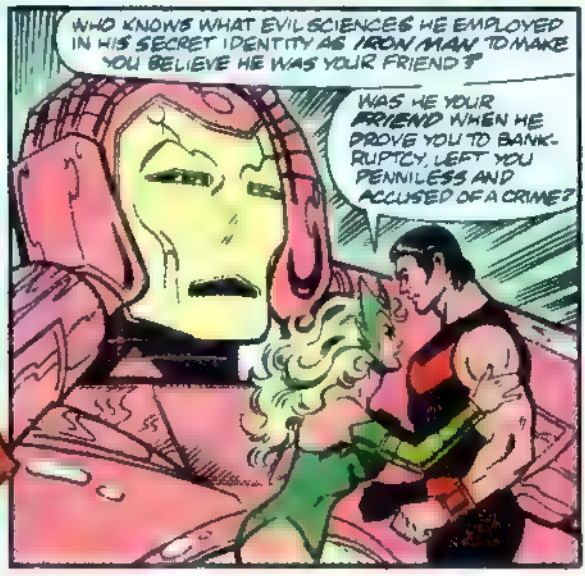
SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH DIMENSION...
SINCE THE DAY YOU ENTERED MY LIFE, ENCHANTRESS, YOU ARE ALL I CARE ABOUT, ALL I LIVE FOR!
YOU ARE ALL THAT MATTERS TO ME
YOU ARE MY LIFE! YOUR WILL IS MY WILL
Stardust Miseries PART 4
WITH A VENGEANCE
THAT'S THE WAY I LIKE IT!
YOU TRULY ARE A WONDER MAN!
AND, HERE, THERE IS NO ONE TO BOTHER US.
FEATURING:
WONDER MAN


..AND NOTHING TO INTERFERE WITH MY PLANS!
YOU ARE MINE NOW.
YOUR WORLD WAS TURNED AGAINST YOU! YOU HAVE BEEN BETRAYED BY YOUR OWN TEAMMATES-- THE AVENGERS!
ALL WE HAVE NOW IS EACH OTHER.
ONCE THERE WERE OTHERS WHO STOOD BESIDE US-- CHAMPIONS OF OUR CAUSE!
OUR COMRADE, BARON ZEMO, WAS HUNTED DOWN AND SLAIN BY THE ACCURSED AVENGERS!*
*A SOMEWHAT ERRONEOUS RETELLING OF EVENTS SHOWN IN AVENGERS #15--TERRY
THEN THERE WAS ANOTHER-- ONE I THOUGHT WOULD ALWAYS BE BY MY SIDE NOW, SKURGE-- THE EXECUTIONER-- HAS ALSO BEEN TAKEN FROM ME

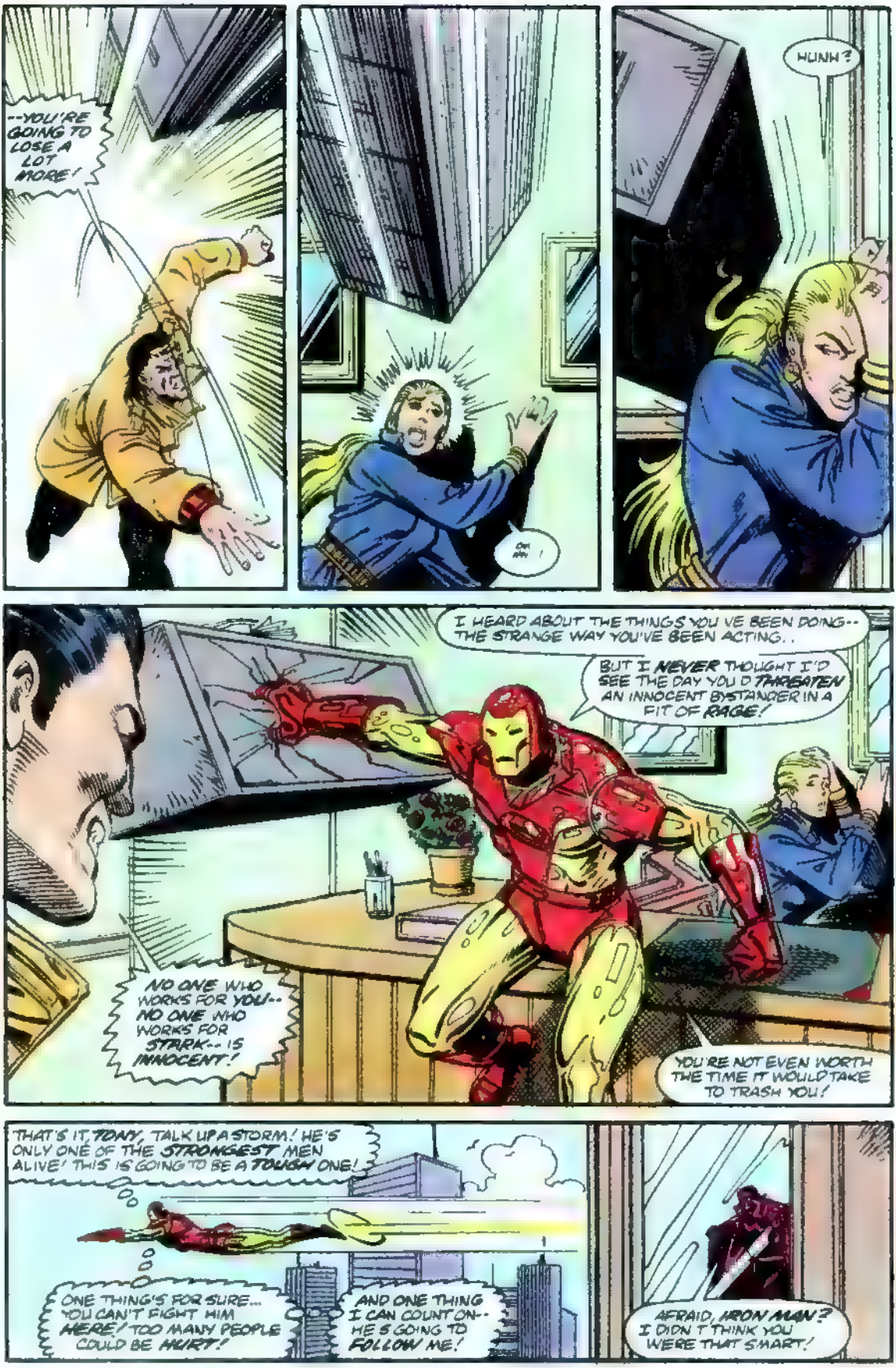

"THE ONLY WAY FOR US TO BE REUNITED IS IN DEATH, A FATE I AM NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT!"*
*SEE THOR #400!-- TERRY
"THOUGH IT PAINS ME GREATLY, I MUST GO ON WITHOUT HIM..."

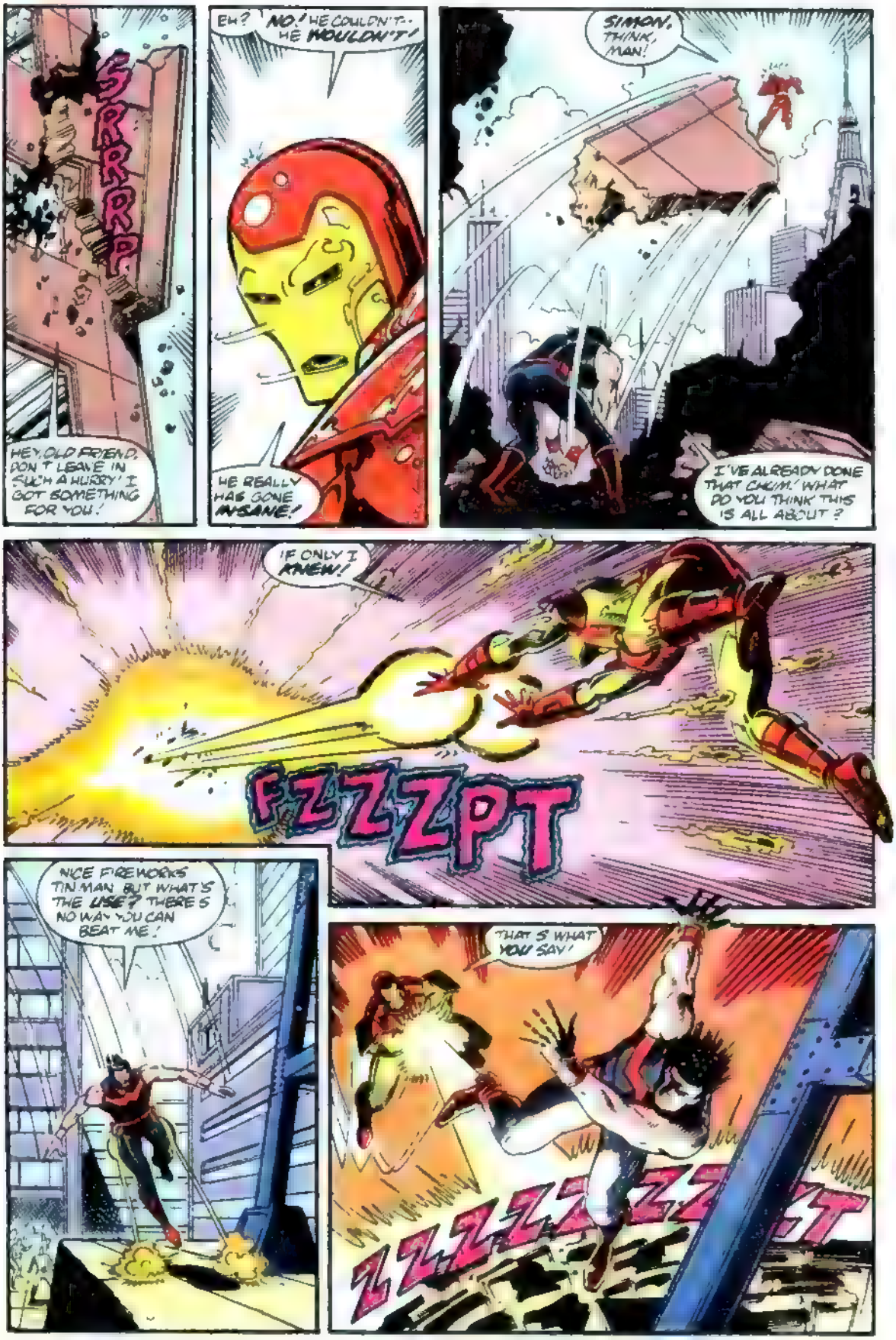
AND THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN, HANDSOME! IT IS AS IF THE VERY FATES HAVE JOINED US TOGETHER IN OUR TIME OF NEED!
TOGETHER WE WILL KNOW WHAT IT TRULY MEANS TO BE ALIVE... AND WE WILL SEEK REVENGE ON THOSE WHO HAVE CAUSED OUR SUFFERING!

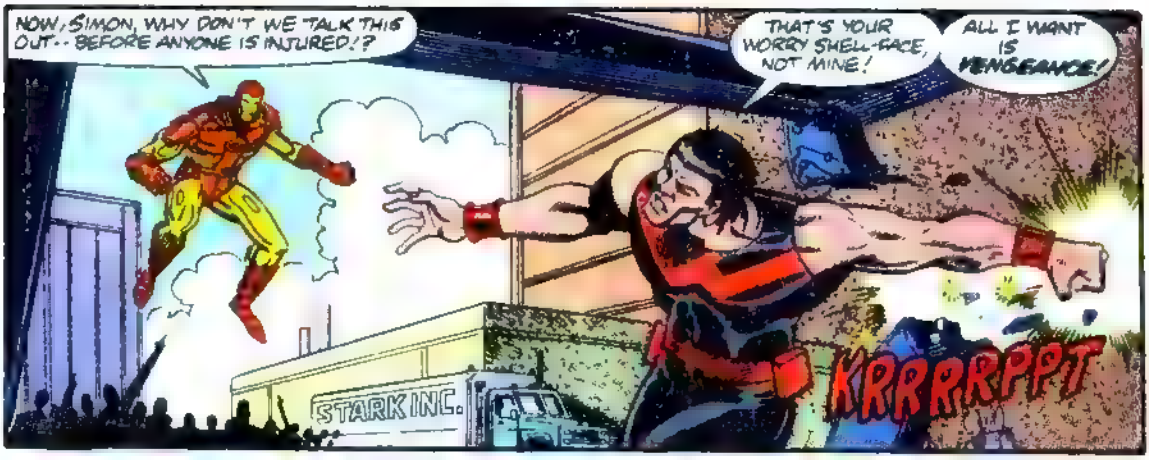
LOOK AT THIS IMAGE AND REMEMBER THE MAN WHO SOUGHT TO DESTROY YOU-- TONY STARK!


WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL SCIENCES HE EMPLOYED IN HIS SECRET IDENTITY AS IRON MAN TO MAKE YOU BELIEVE HE WAS YOUR FRIEND?
WAS HE YOUR FRIEND WHEN HE DROVE YOU TO BANKRUPTCY, LEFT YOU PENNILESS AND ACCUSED OF A CRIME?

"NO, MY LOVE, IT WAS I WHO CAME TO YOUR AID ON THAT FATEFUL DAY..." *
I'LL PAY MR. WILLIAMS' BAIL BOND!
WHY? I DON'T KNOW YOU!
AH, BUT YOU WILL, MR WILLIAMS!
"ZEMO, EXECUTIONER AND I BROUGHT YOU TO SOUTH AMERICA WHERE YOU WERE BOMBARDED WITH THE MOST POTENT IONIC RAY EVER ASSEMBLED IN ONE CONCENTRATED AREA--
--ENDOWING YOU WITH YOUR AWESOME ABILITIES!
A SHORT TIME LATER AT STARK ENTERPRISES...
I WANT TO SEE STARK! I WANT TO SEE YOUR BOSS!
I WANT TO SEE IRON MAN!
B-BUT, I KEEP TELLING YOU--THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! MR STARK IS VERY BUSY AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN CONTACT IRON MAN!
LISTEN, YOU GOT A PRETTY FACE IF YOU WANT TO KEEP IT THAT WAY, LET ME SEE STARK!
B-BUT..I'LL LOSE MY JOB!
IF YOU WON'T DO WHAT I WANT--

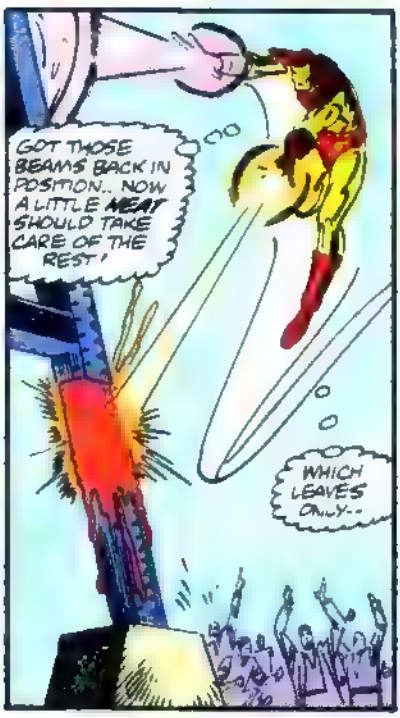

--YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE A LOT MORE!
HUNH?
I HEARD ABOUT THE THINGS YOU'VE BEEN DOING-- THE STRANGE WAY YOU'VE BEEN ACTING..
BUT I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY YOU'D THREATEN AN INNOCENT BYSTANDER IN A FIT OF RAGE!
NO ONE WHO WORKS FOR YOU-- NO ONE WHO WORKS FOR STARK-- IS INNOCENT!
YOU'RE NOT EVEN WORTH THE TIME IT WOULD TAKE TO TRASH YOU!
THAT'S IT, TONY, TALK UP A STORM! HE'S ONLY ONE OF THE STRONGEST MEN ALIVE! THIS IS GOING TO BE A TOUGH ONE!
ONE THING'S FOR SURE... YOU CAN'T FIGHT HIM HERE! TOO MANY PEOPLE COULD BE HURT!
AND ONE THING I CAN COUNT ON-- HE'S GOING TO FOLLOW ME!
AFRAID, IRON MAN? I DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE THAT SMART!


SKRKRP
HEY, OLD FRIEND, DON'T LEAVE IN SUCH A HURRY! I GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU!
EH? NO! HE COULDN'T-- HE WOULDN'T!
HE REALLY HAS GONE INSANE!
SIMON, THINK, MAN!
I'VE ALREADY DONE THAT CHUM. WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS IS ALL ABOUT?
IF ONLY I KNEW!
FZZZPT
NICE FIREWORKS TIN MAN, BUT WHAT'S THE USE? THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN BEAT ME!
THAT'S WHAT YOU SAY!
ZZZZZZZT


NOW, SIMON, WHY DON'T WE TALK THIS OUT-- BEFORE ANYONE IS INJURED!?
THAT'S YOUR WORRY SHELL-FACE, NOT MINE!
ALL I WANT IS VENGEANCE!
STARK INC.
KRRRRPPT

GOOD LORD! DON'T YOU SEE THOSE PEOPLE? DON'T YOU CARE WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO THEM?
WHY SHOULD I?

GOT TO MOVE FAST! PEARLSON RAYS DON'T FAIL ME NOW!

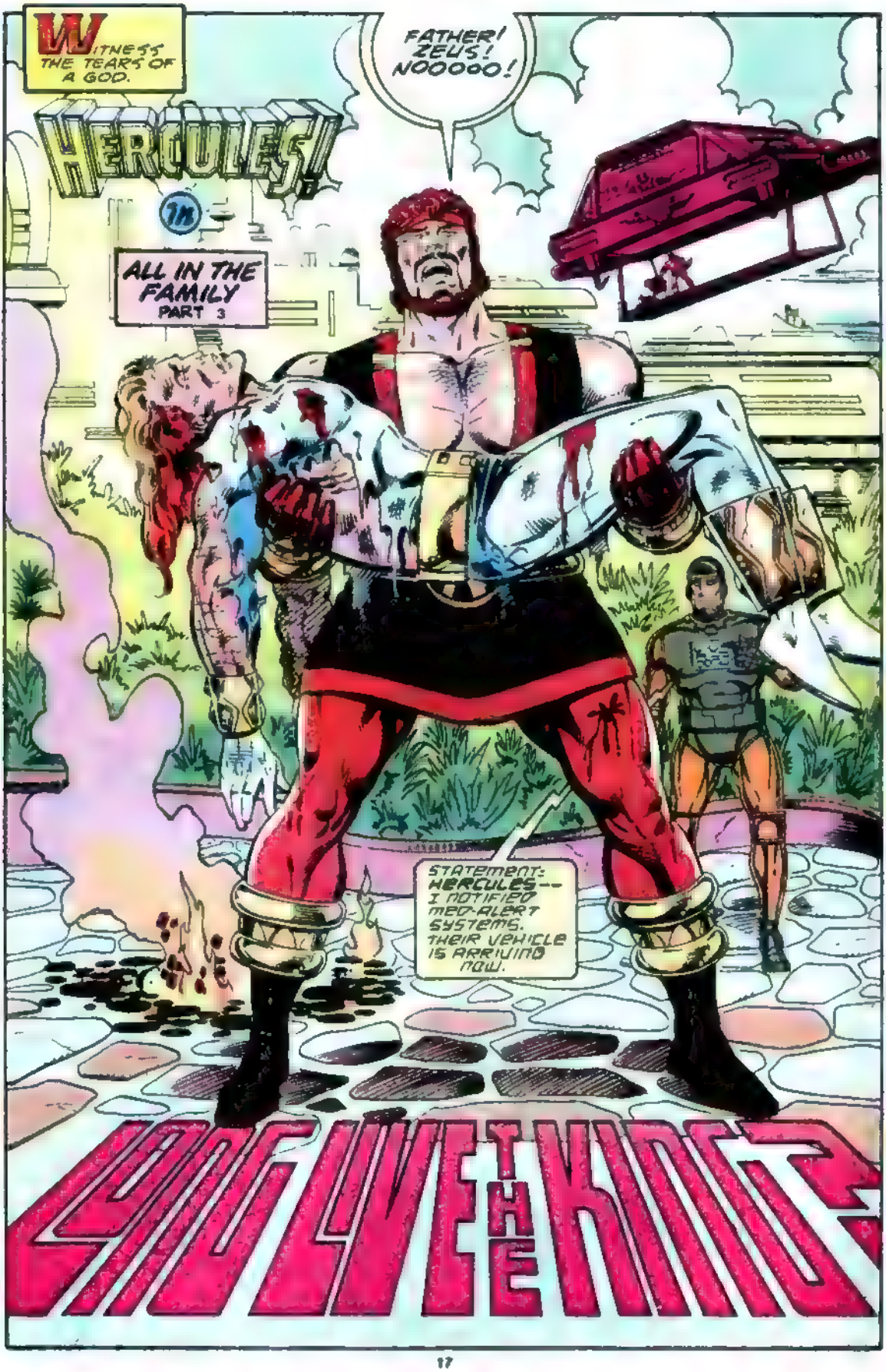

GOT THOSE BEAMS BACK IN POSITION.. NOW A LITTLE HEAT SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THE REST!
WHICH LEAVES ONLY--

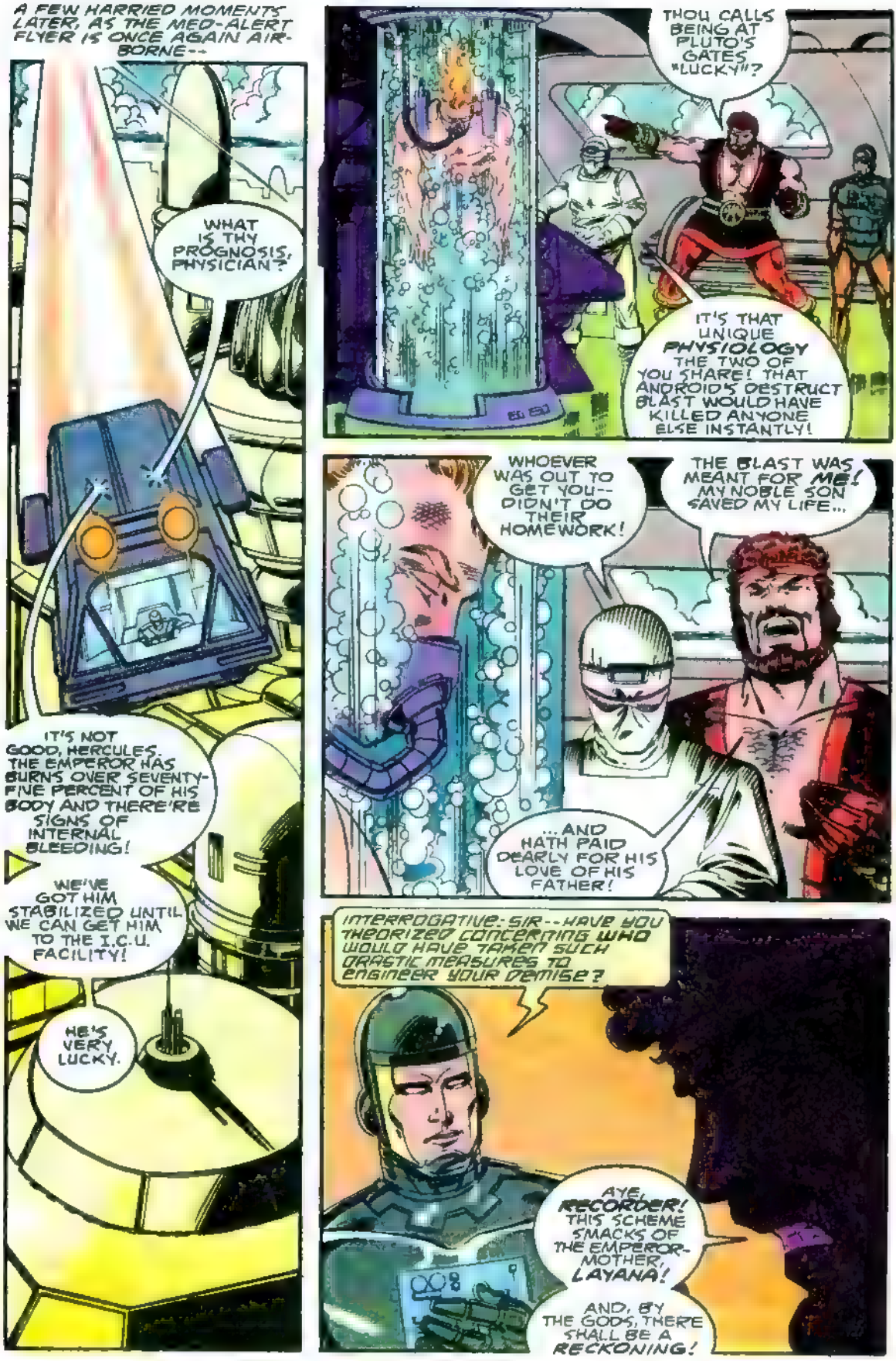
FORGET ABOUT ME? THAT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA!
RIGHT NOW I WISH I COULD FORGET ABOUT YOU!
YOU NEARLY KILLED THE BEAST--AND YOU COULD HAVE KILLED MANY MORE ONLY MOMENTS AGO! HAVE YOU NO CONSCIENCE?

SUDDENLY YOU'RE A BLEEDING HEART! SINCE WHEN DID YOU CARE WHAT DAMAGE YOU DID TO ANYONE?
I'VE ALWAYS CARED--AND I STILL DO!
KZAP
THAT'S MORE THAN I CAN SAY FOR YOU

ALL I CARE ABOUT IS KILLING YOU!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? DANCE ME TO DEATH?
NOT QUITE, YOU IRON DEMON!
I JUST THOUGHT I'D DO THIS!
WHAT?!
NO! MY CHESTPLATE!
FLLT
ZZT
WITHOUT IT--
--I'M FINISHED!
GOOD THING I GOT OUT HERE WHEN I DID!
HOPE THIS GIZMO WORKS!
HERE GOES NOTHING!
KRZPPZTKZT
ARRGHGH!
HMM MAYBE IT WAS SOMETHING AFTER ALL!

UNNNGH!
THUMP
IRON MAN! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
NO PROBLEM, PARTNER, JUST A LITTLE STUNNED
WELL, CHEER UP, AVENGER! YOU FARED A WHOLE LOT BETTER THAN I DID!
WISH I COULD SAY THE SAME FOR MY ARMOR!
IF NOT FOR THIS REGENERATIVE BODY SUIT THAT YOU AND DR. PYM DEVELOPED--
--I'D HAVE BEEN A GONER BY NOW!
HOPE I CAN RETURN THE FAVOR SOME DAY!
NO NEED FOR THAT! RIGHT NOW WONDER MAN IS OUR PROBLEM!
LET'S JUST HOPE WE'LL BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING TO HELP HIM!
WELL, AT LEAST HE'S HERE--
BLINK
NOW?!
OH MY STARS AND GARTERS!
HE'S GONE!
CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE...


WITNESS THE TEARS OF A GOD.
FATHER! ZEUS! NOOOOO!
HERCULES!
IN
ALL IN THE FAMILY
PART 3
STATEMENT: HERCULES-- I NOTIFIED MED-ALERT SYSTEMS. THEIR VEHICLE IS ARRIVING NOW.
LONG LIVE THE KING


A FEW HARRIED MOMENTS LATER, AS THE MED-ALERT FLYER IS ONCE AGAIN AIR-BORNE--
WHAT IS THY PROGNOSIS, PHYSICIAN?
IT'S NOT GOOD, HERCULES. THE EMPEROR HAS BURNS OVER SEVENTY-FIVE PERCENT OF HIS BODY AND THERE'RE SIGNS OF INTERNAL BLEEDING!
WE'VE GOT HIM STABILIZED UNTIL WE CAN GET HIM TO THE I.C.U. FACILITY!
HE'S VERY LUCKY.
THOU CALLS BEING AT PLUTO'S GATES "LUCKY"?
IT'S THAT UNIQUE PHYSIOLOGY THE TWO OF YOU SHARE! THAT ANDROID'S DESTRUCT BLAST WOULD HAVE KILLED ANYONE ELSE INSTANTLY!
WHOEVER WAS OUT TO GET YOU-- DIDN'T DO THEIR HOMEWORK!
THE BLAST WAS MEANT FOR ME! MY NOBLE SON SAVED MY LIFE...
...AND HATH PAID DEARLY FOR HIS LOVE OF HIS FATHER!
INTERROGATIVE: SIR--HAVE YOU THEORIZED CONCERNING WHO WOULD HAVE TAKEN SUCH DRASTIC MEASURES TO ENGINEER YOUR DEMISE?
AYE, RECORDER! THIS SCHEME SMACKS OF THE EMPEROR-MOTHER, LAYANA!
AND, BY THE GODS, THERE SHALL BE A RECKONING!

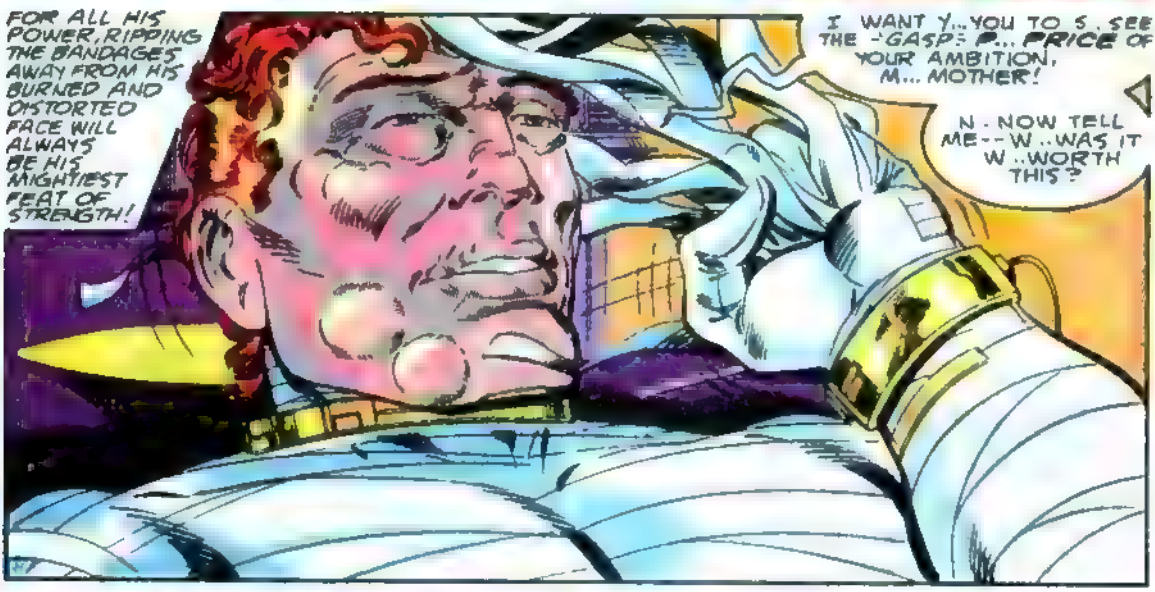
A SHORT TIME LATER, IN THE PALACE'S AUDIENCE CHAMBER.
GUARDS-- EMPEROR ARIMATHES HAS ISSUED A LIST OF UNDESIRABLES HE WISHES ROUNDED UP AND...
WHUMP
S-SOMEONE IS ATTACKING! G-GUARDS-- PROTECT THE EMPEROR!
KER-
VILE WOMAN! I HAVE COME FOR THEE!
BLAM
Y-YOU-- ALIVE?!
GUARDS-- KILL HIM! I COMMAND YOU!
B-WOK
BUT BEFORE THE STARTLED SOLDIERS CAN ACT...
BLAM
KRWAP
--THE PRINCE OF POWER DISPATCHES THEM IN THE SPACE OF A HEARTBEAT!

THY SCHEME HATH FAILED, EVIL WITCH! NOW--THOU SHALT PAY THE PRICE OF THY PERFIDY!
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH, HERCULES! I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU ESCAPED MY ASSASSIN'S TRAP --BUT VICTORY IS NOT YET YOURS!
I STILL HAVE ONE MORE CARD TO PLAY IN THIS HAND! THIS BLASTER HAS A HAIR-TRIGGER! TAKE ANOTHER STEP AND--
--I'LL SCATTER WHAT THIS SKRULL USES FOR BRAINS ALL OVER THIS ROOM!
HAST THOU NOT CAUSED ENOUGH PAIN WITHOUT TAKING THE LIVES OF EVEN MORE INNOCENTS?
ISN'T IT ENOUGH THAT OUR SON LIES, AS WE SPEAK, AT DEATH'S DOOR BECAUSE OF THEE?
WHA.. A-ARIMATHES IS-- =CHOKE= H HOW

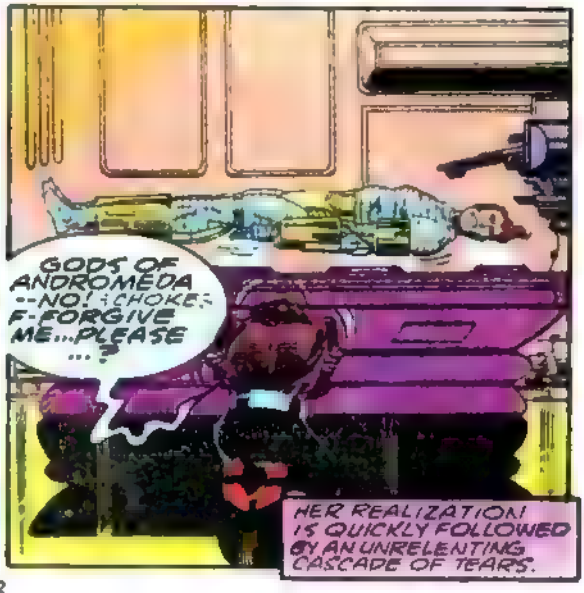
SUDDENLY...
STATEMENT: ALLOW ME TO RELIEVE YOU OF THIS WEAPON, MADAM. THE SKRULL, NO MATTER HOW QUESTIONABLE HIS WORTH, IS STILL OUR FRIEND.
INTER-ROGATIVE: HOW DID I DO, SIR? I SO SELDOM TAKE A PHYSICAL HAND IN YOUR ADVENTURES! WAS MY PERFORMANCE SATISFACTORY?
AYE, RECORDER! 'TWAS WISE TO SECRETE THEE IN FROM THE REAR! I SUSPECTED SHE'D ATTEMPT SUCH TREACHERY!
:GASP: Y.. YOU'RE H... HURTING ME... :CHOKE:
I SHALL DO MORE THAN THAT, "DEAR LAYANA"! BUT BEFORE I METE OUT RETRIBUTION--
--THERE IS SOMETHING I WANT THEE TO SEE!
NO... PLEASE...
THE SHORT FLIGHT TO THE MEDICAL FACILITY TAKES A SEEMING ETERNITY FOR THE EMPEROR-MOTHER!
DURING THE ENTIRE JOURNEY, POWERFUL FINGERS THAT COULD CRUSH THE HARDEST STONE WITH EASE NEVER LEAVE HER THROAT! UNTIL--
LOOK, LAYANA! GAZE UPON WHAT THY MACHINATIONS HATH WROUGHT!
NOOOOO! M... MY SON...!

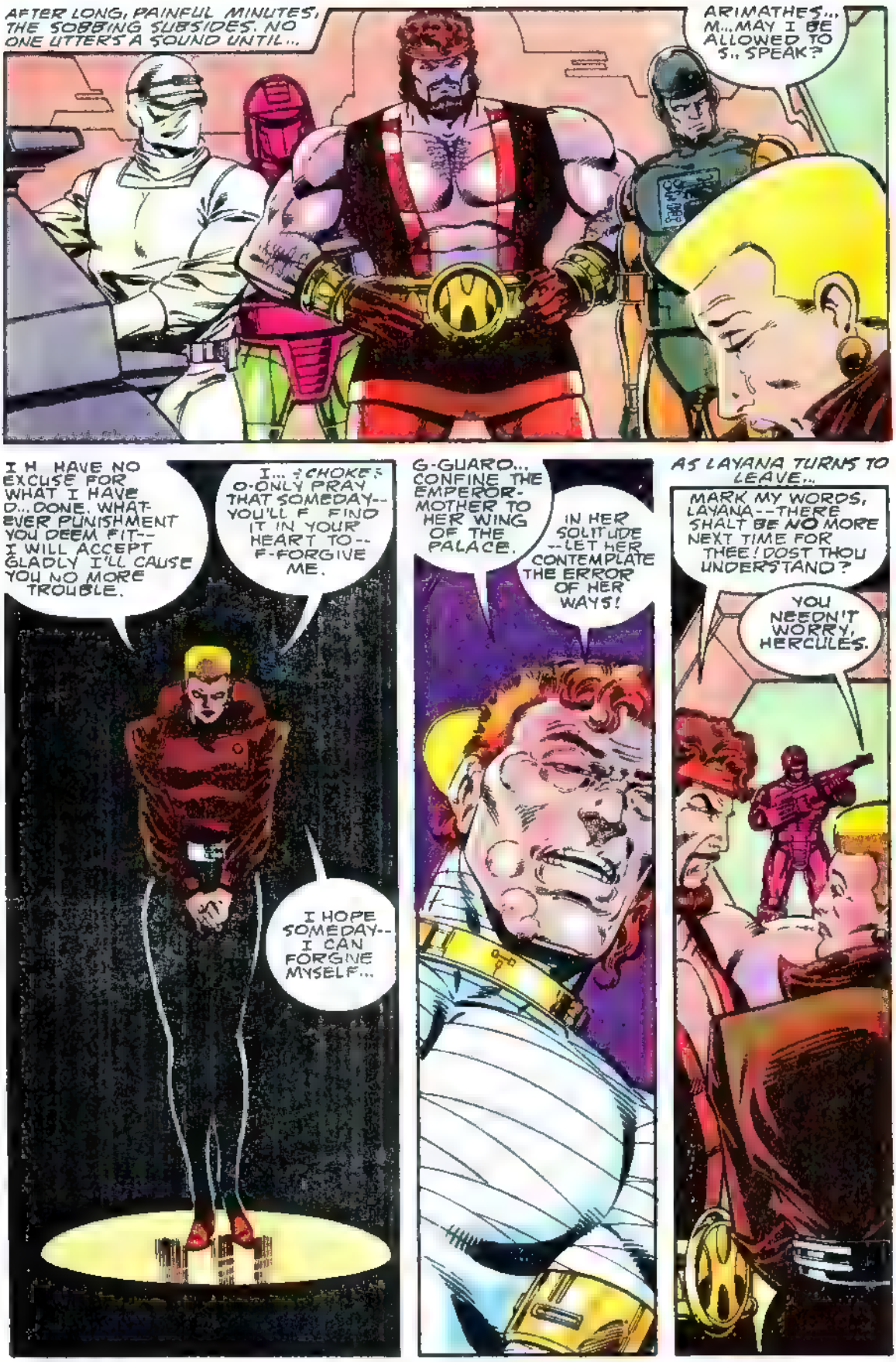
TAKE THEE A PROPER LOOK, WITCH!
REMEMBER OUR SON--HANDSOME AND VITAL--REDUCED NOW TO THIS TWISTED AND CHARRED SHELL!
BEHOLD--THE CONSEQUENCES OF A MOTHER'S "LOVE"!
#?*%! YOU...

WITH A VOICE THAT CRAWLS PAINFULLY THROUGH A MIRE OF AGONY, THE EMPEROR ARIMATHES SPEAKS..
M..MOTHER. C.. COME.. CLOSER...


FOR ALL HIS POWER, RIPPING THE BANDAGES AWAY FROM HIS BURNED AND DISTORTED FACE WILL ALWAYS BE HIS MIGHTIEST FEAT OF STRENGTH!
I WANT Y..YOU TO S..SEE THE -GASP- P... PRICE OF YOUR AMBITION, M... MOTHER!
N..NOW TELL ME--W..WAS IT W..WORTH THIS?

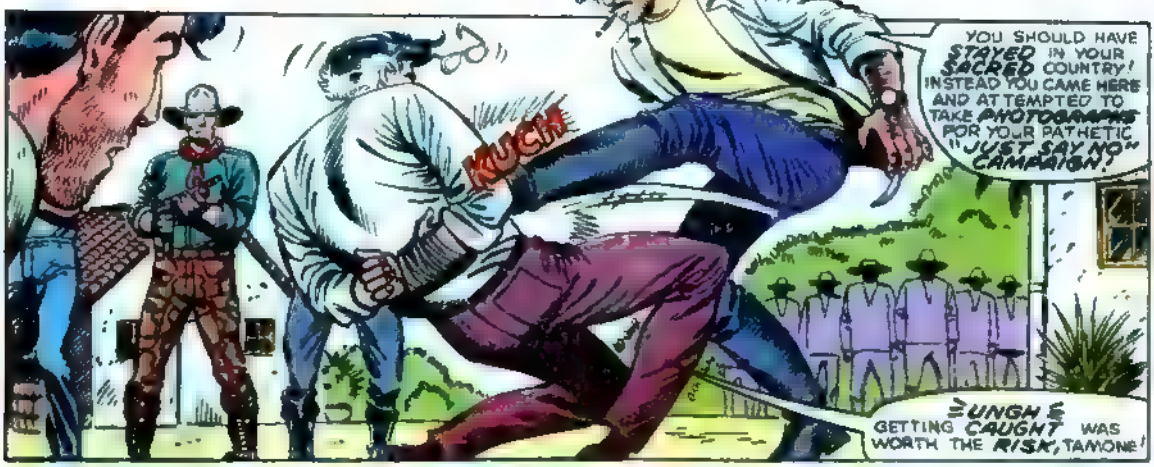
THE ROOM IS UNCOMFORTABLY SILENT. THEN, A WORD...
NO.


GODS OF ANDROMEDA --NO! -CHOKE- F-FORGIVE ME...PLEASE ...?
HER REALIZATION IS QUICKLY FOLLOWED BY AN UNRELENTING CASCADE OF TEARS.


AFTER LONG, PAINFUL MINUTES, THE SOBBING SUBSIDES. NO ONE UTTERS A SOUND UNTIL...
ARIMATHES... M...MAY I BE ALLOWED TO S.. SPEAK?
I H HAVE NO EXCUSE FOR WHAT I HAVE D...DONE. WHATEVER PUNISHMENT YOU DEEM FIT-- I WILL ACCEPT GLADLY I'LL CAUSE YOU NO MORE TROUBLE.
I... :CHOKE: O-ONLY PRAY THAT SOMEDAY-- YOU'LL F FIND IT IN YOUR HEART TO-- F-FORGIVE ME.
I HOPE SOMEDAY-- I CAN FORGIVE MYSELF...
G-GUARD... CONFINE THE EMPEROR-MOTHER TO HER WING OF THE PALACE.
IN HER SOLITUDE --LET HER CONTEMPLATE THE ERROR OF HER WAYS!
AS LAYANA TURNS TO LEAVE...
MARK MY WORDS, LAYANA--THERE SHALT BE NO MORE NEXT TIME FOR THEE! DOST THOU UNDERSTAND?
YOU NEEDN'T WORRY, HERCULES.

I KNOW, ALL TOO WELL THERE WILL BE NO "NEXT TIME."
AFTER SHE DEPARTS...
I HAVE GOOD NEWS FOR YOU! IT LOOKS LIKE THE EMPEROR WILL MAKE A FULL RECOVERY! ALL MY INSTRUMENTS SHOW HE'S OUT OF DANGER!
DIDST THOU HEAR, SON?! THE CRISIS HATH PASSED AND THOU SHALL SIT UPON THY THRONE AGAIN!
BUT SOMEWHAT WORSE FOR WEAR, DON'T YOU THINK, FATHER?
DON'T BE SO CONCERNED WITH THAT, SIRE! AS SOON AS YOU'RE STABLE, WE'LL BEGIN RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY! YOU'LL BE LIKE NEW IN NO TIME!
AYE--AT LEAST ON THE SURFACE...
WOULD SOMEONE PLEASE TELL ME WHAT THE FROPP IS GOIN' ON AROUND HERE?
S...SKYPP!...?
ONE MINUTE I'M PLAYIN' CARDS AND THE NEXT THING I KNOW--
--I'M IN A HOSPITAL WITH A BUNCH OF WIRES UP MY SCROGGIES! WHAT GIVES?
LET US JUST SAY--THOU WERT KING FOR A DAY!
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO EXPECT A STRAIGHT ANSWER!
END

"FORCED FED!"
FEATURING:
FREEDOM FORCE!
SENATOR KELLY--DO YOU WISH TO MAKE A FINAL STATEMENT?
PLEASE KEEP IT BRIEF, SIR--YOU DON'T WANT TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE.
DON'T EXPECT ME TO BEG, TAMONE. AS A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, I'LL WILLINGLY DIE IN DEFENSE OF MY COUNTRY!

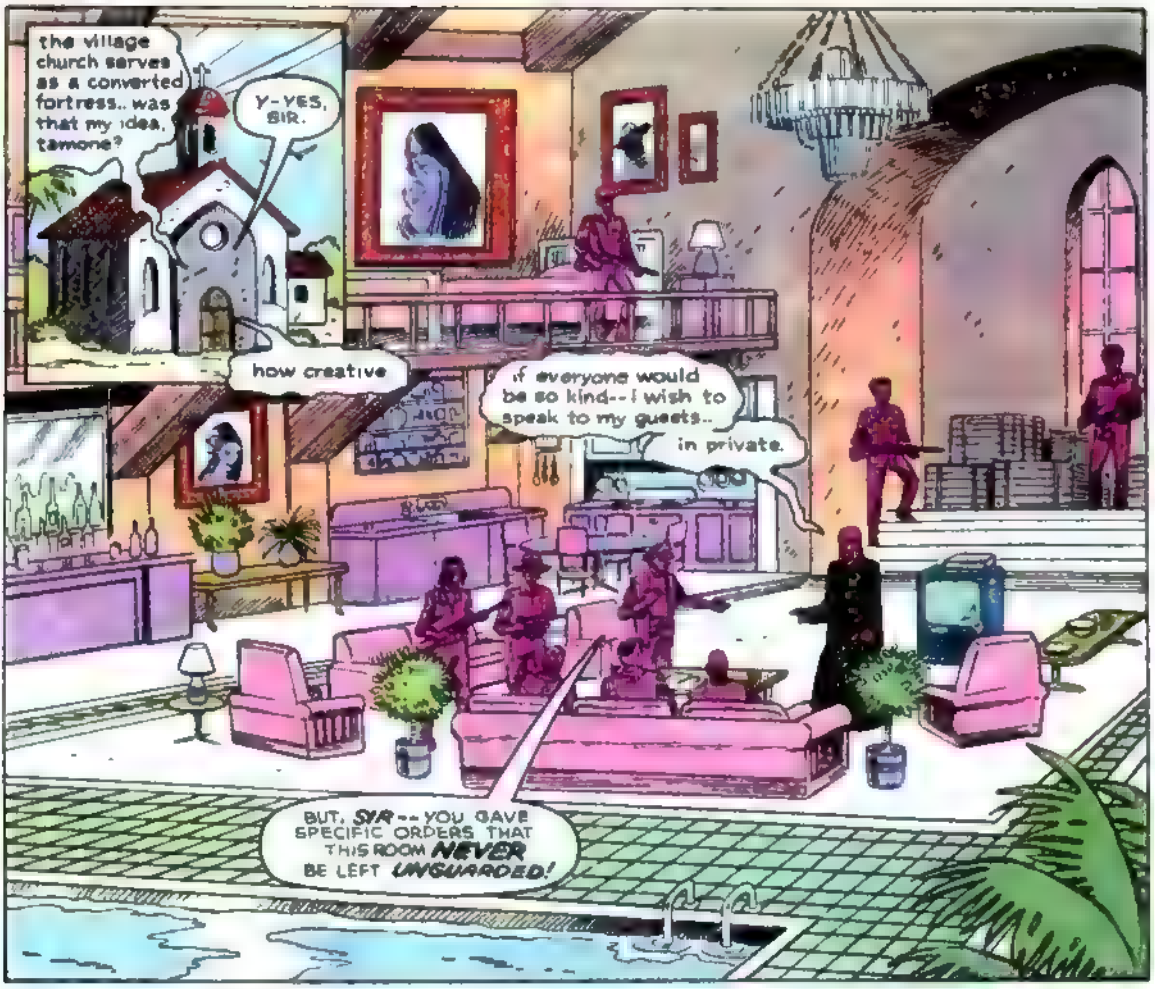

KUCH
YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN YOUR SACRED COUNTRY! INSTEAD YOU CAME HERE AND ATTEMPTED TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS FOR YOUR PATHETIC "JUST SAY NO" CAMPAIGN!
=UNGH= GETTING CAUGHT WAS WORTH THE RISK, TAMONE!

WHETHER I LIVE OR DIE IS IN-CONSEQUENTIAL...
...AMERICA WILL WIN ITS WAR ON DRUGS!

I'M AFRAID YOU WILL HAVE TO READ OF YOUR VICTORY FROM THE GRAVE!
ON MY COMMAND...
...READY...
...AIM...
CHIKT
stop.

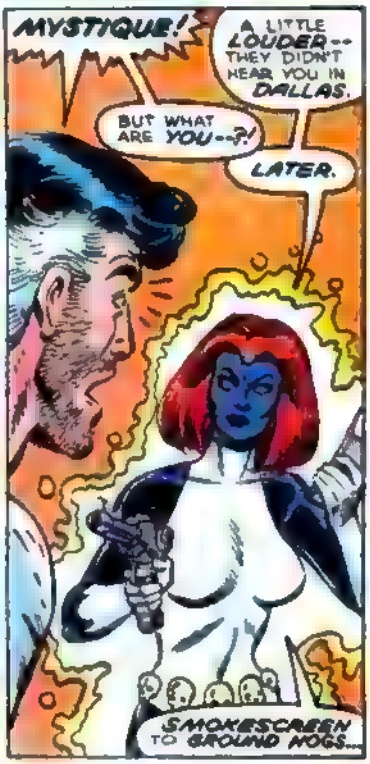
before i left...did i not order you to see to the safety of my guests?
N-NO, SEÑOR MUERTE-- JUST THE OPPOSITE! YOU WARNED THAT SENATOR KELLY AND HIS AIDES WERE TO BE KILLED BEFORE YOUR RETURN!
oh.
i have changed my mind.

have them brought to. to
THE MANSION?
yes--
--the mansion

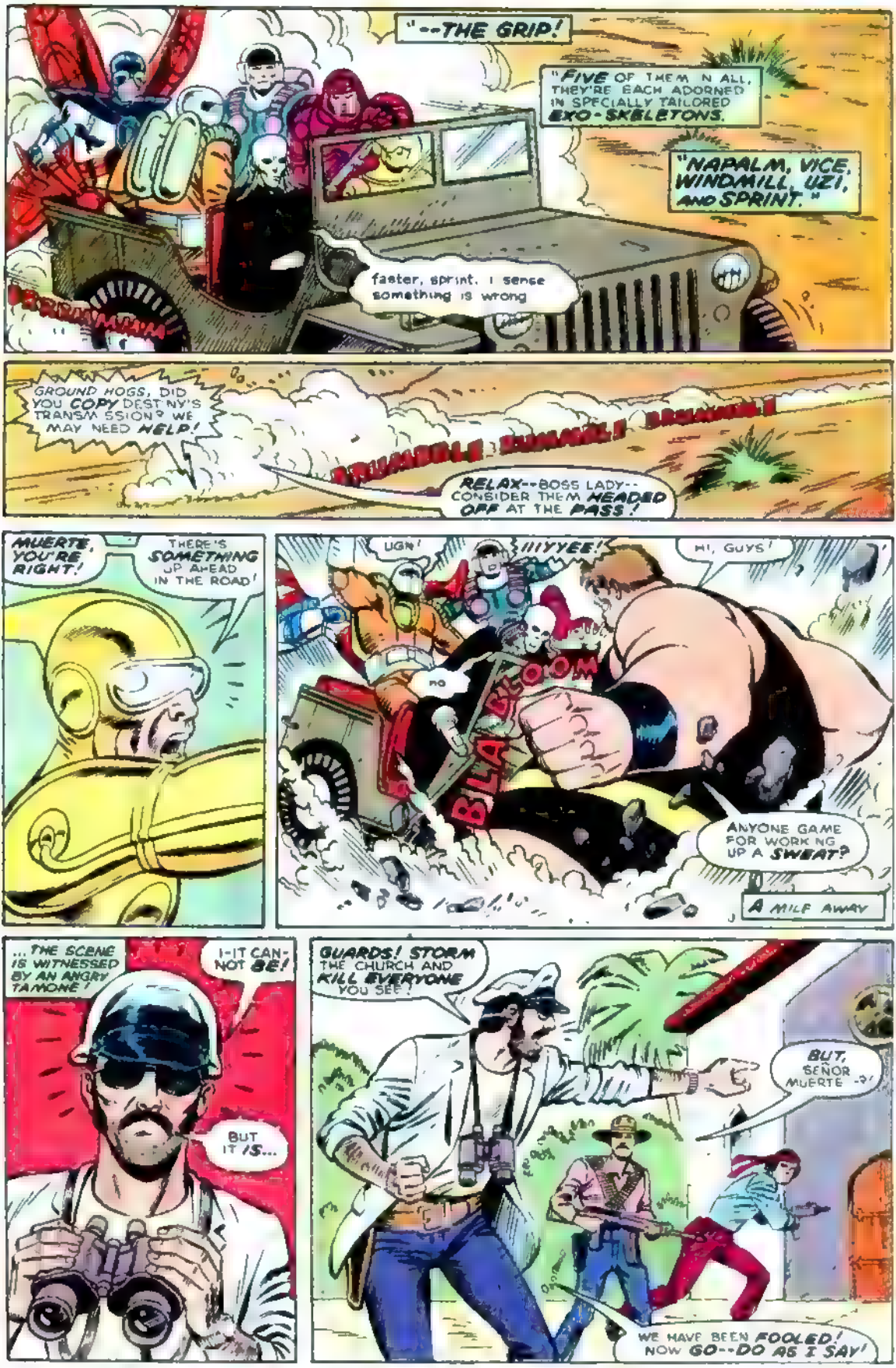

the village church serves as a converted fortress.. was that my idea, tamone?
Y-YES, SIR.
how creative
if everyone would be so kind--I wish to speak to my guests..
in private.
BUT, SYR--YOU GAVE SPECIFIC ORDERS THAT THIS ROOM NEVER BE LEFT UNGUARDED!

so i did. did I ever say "if you presume to question me.. I will kill you"?
ER--NOT IN SO MANY WORDS.
AFTER THE ROOM HAS BEEN CLEARED OF SENOR MUERTE'S GUARDS...

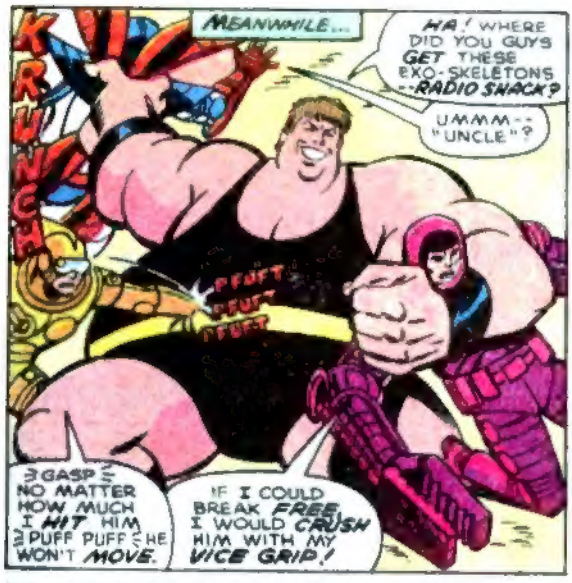
SO "MISTER DEATH," YOU'RE THE MONSTER RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE OF THE LARGEST DRUG PIPELINES IN ALL OF SOUTH AMERICA?
calm down, Robert...
MY TIGHT SCHEDULE DOESN'T INCLUDE TIME FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN SPEECHES.


MYSTIQUE!
A LITTLE LOUDER--THEY DIDN'T HEAR YOU IN DALLAS.
BUT WHAT ARE YOU--?!
LATER.
SMOKESCREEN TO GROUND HOGS...

...COME IN, GROUND HOGS!
TELL HER WE'LL BE THERE ON TIME, BLOB... NO THANKS TO YOU.
RRUMBLE RUMBLE RRUMBLE
KEEP IT UP, AVALANCHE, AND YOU WON'T NEED YER MUTANT EARTH-SHIFTING POWER TO PLOW THROUGH TO THE VILLAGE...
CHUPPACHUPPA
BOYS... PLEASE TRY TO BEHAVE LIKE THE RESPECTABLE--THOUGH RELUCTANT--FEDERAL AGENTS THAT YOU ARE.
YOU'RE NOT ALONE? THE REST OF FREEDOM FORCE IS HERE?
NOT ALL OF US, ROBERT... JUST ENOUGH TO RESCUE YOU.
COME IN, FIREFLIES!
NO WORRIES, MADAME "M"...
...PYRO AND SPIRAL HERE--RIGHT ON SCHEDULE AND ON OUR WAY.
MAYBE I WAS WRONG WHEN I OBJECTED TO A CONDITIONAL PARDON FOR YOU MUTANTS. THE FIVE OF YOU CAN NO DOUBT DEFEAT MUERTE AND DESTROY HIS DRUG EMPIRE!
HARDLY.
WE'RE NOT THE AVENGERS... OUR MISSION WAS TO RESCUE YOU. IF IT WERE UP TO FREEDOM FORCE, WE'D HAVE LEFT YOU AND YOUR ANTI-MUTANT BIGOTRY TO FACE THAT FIRING SQUAD!
FORGET ABOUT ME! THINK OF THE VILLAGERS THAT ARE RULED BY THIS HOMICIDAL DESPOT. EVEN A MUTANT CAN'T BE THAT HEART--
CHUPPACHUPPACHUPPA
MYSTIQUE! INSTRUMENTS INDICATE AN IMPENDING CONFRONTATION AGAINST SUPER-POWERED ADVERSARIES!
HOW CAN THAT BE, SPIRAL? THERE WAS NO MENTION OF PARANORMALS DURING THE BRIEFING!
THAT'S HOW MUERTE ORIGINALLY DOOMED MY PLANE--IT'S HOW HE CONTROLS THE VILLAGERS.
HE RULES WITH AN IRON FIST. HE CALLS THEM--


"--THE GRIP!
"FIVE OF THEM IN ALL, THEY'RE EACH ADORNED IN SPECIALLY TAILORED EXO-SKELETONS.
"NAPALM, VICE, WINDMILL, UZI, AND SPRINT."
faster, sprint. I sense something is wrong
GROUND HOGS, DID YOU COPY DEST NY'S TRANSM SSION? WE MAY NEED HELP!
RELAX--BOSS LADY--CONSIDER THEM HEADED OFF AT THE PASS!
MUERTE, YOU'RE RIGHT!
THERE'S SOMETHING UP AHEAD IN THE ROAD!
UGH!
!!!YYEE!
HI, GUYS!
BLA
BLOOM
ANYONE GAME FOR WORK NG UP A SWEAT?
A MILE AWAY
... THE SCENE IS WITNESSED BY AN ANGRY TAMONE!
I-IT CAN-NOT BE!
BUT IT IS...
GUARDS! STORM THE CHURCH AND KILL EVERYONE YOU SEE!
BUT, SEÑOR MUERTE -?-
WE HAVE BEEN FOOLED! NOW GO--DO AS I SAY!

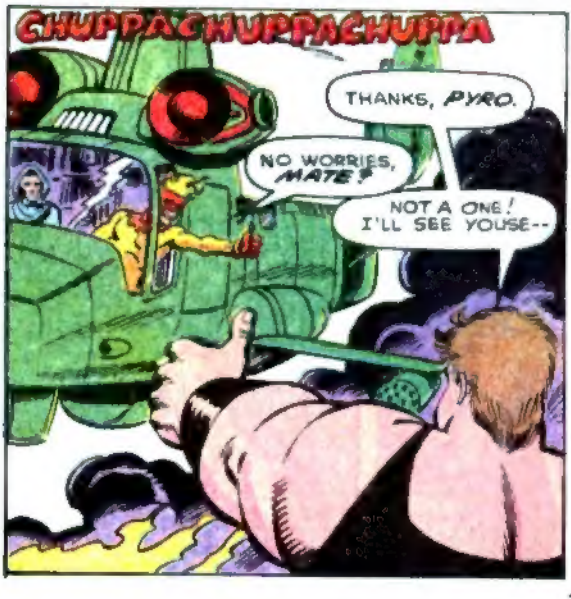
BUT AS THE CONFUSED GUARDS ENTER THE CHURCH
SEÑOR TAMONE-- YOU WERE JUST OUTSIDE!
I WAS?
YOU TOLD US TO KILL EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM!
I DID..?
THEN YOU SHOULD HAVE LISTENED!
ZZZZT
PFZZZT
THE GAME IS UP, MYSTIQUE! NOW YOU'LL HAVE TO BATTLE MUERTE AND HIS PEOPLE!
PIPHT
IF YOU INTEND TO LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SAY "YOU TOLD ME SO..."
.. THEN KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN!
OUTSIDE...
KEEP FIRING, MEN! WE WON'T STOP UNTIL EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM IS DEAD!
OR UNTIL THE EARTH OPENS UP AND SWALLOWS YOU WHOLE -- WHICHEVER COMES FIRST!
KRAKKK


KRUNCH
MEANWHILE...
HA! WHERE DID YOU GUYS GET THESE EXO-SKELETONS --RADIO SHACK?
UMMM-- "UNCLE"?
PFUFT PFUFT PFUFT
GASP NO MATTER HOW MUCH I HIT HIM PUFF PUFF HE WON'T MOVE.
IF I COULD BREAK FREE, I WOULD CRUSH HIM WITH MY VICE GRIP!

MAYBE YOU CAN THINK OF A WAY TO BEAT ME IF YOU PUT YOUR HEADS TOGETHER!
OOOOPS. I GUESS NOT.
SO! UNCHK

YOU'VE STOPPED LAUGHING! IS IT BECAUSE YOU NOW FACE NAPALM AND UZI?
IS IT BECAUSE YOU ARE PREPARING TO DIE AS I BURN THE SKIN FROM YOUR BODY?
ACTUALLY...

...I JUST WANTED TO GET A GOOD LOOK AT YOUR FACES WHEN YOU FIGGER OUT I HAVE A TEAMMATE--
FWAAASHABOOM
--WHO'S GOT THE MUTANT POWER TO CONTROL ANY FLAME!


CHUPPACHUPPACHUPPA
THANKS, PYRO.
NO WORRIES, MATE!
NOT A ONE! I'LL SEE YOUSE--

"--AT THE MEETING SPOT."
CHUPPACHUPPA
THERE'S THE HELICOPTER, GENTLEMAN-- GET MOVING!
WHAT ABOUT YOU? ARE YOU PLANNING ON FINISHING OFF MUERTE?
I DON'T HAVE TO ANSWER TO YOU, SENATOR KELLY.

CHUPPACHUPPACHUPPACHUPPA
CAN'T WE TAKE JUST A LITTLE MONEY? A MILLION OR TWO...?
THAT WOULD BE A VIOLATION OF OUR PAROLE, AVALANCHE. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, WE'RE THE "GOOD GUYS" NOW-- REMEMBER?
ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE'S NO REASON MUERTE SHOULD ENJOY ALL THAT MONEY.
AND BURY IT HE DOES...
YOU MEAN--?
BURY IT.
RUMMBLE
RUMMBLE
BA-ROOOM
...UNDER TONS OF DIRT AND STONE.
CHUPPACHUPPA
LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE COMPANY...
I'LL HANDLE THIS.
CHUPPACHUPPA
it does not end here. i will rebuild my empire. i will track you down. i will kill you.
CHUPPACHUPPA
I DON'T LIKE DRUG DEALERS, MUERTE--THEY DESTROY THE LIVES OF HUMANS AND MUTANTS ALIKE.
IF YOU DO FIND US--YOU HAD BETTER HOPE THAT FREEDOM FORCE STILL WORKS FOR THE GOOD GUYS.
SEÑOR MUERTE, IF YOU'RE EVER IN AMERICA--
yes?
--DROP DEAD! HYUK HYUK HYUK!
the end

MARVEL® READERS PRESENT

Dear Terry,

After reading the second installment of the "Having a Wild Weekend" storyline, presented in MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #32, I have decided to write you and let you know that I am delighted with the humor of the story. Even though we had not known of his impending death at the onset of this storyline, the Loonies are a laughingly wonderful tribute to the life of Mel Blanc. I personally hope you will dedicate this storyline to the memory of Mr. Blanc. Congratulations go to Michael Higgins and Erik Larsen for creatively depicting one of my favorite group of heroes, Excalibur.

I also enjoy the realistic depiction of the troubles in South Africa shown in the Black Panther storyline. Let me also say that I would like to see more of Don MGregor's work after these twenty-five (whew!) chapters are complete.

I have a little trouble with the Coldblood story, to tell you the truth. I find that the character is a little too much like Deathlok.

The Sunfire story wasn't bad, but the way Diana Albers lettered the story gave me the creeps. The lack of word balloons and the syle of writing made me think of a silent movie. Maybe the story would have been better in shades of grey.

Well, that's all for now, so until Captain Marvel gets dreadlocks, make mine Marvel! (She what?!?)

Cary Michael Bass
2410 20th St., NW 208
Washington, DC 20009

It's a good idea to dedicate the Excalibur storyline to Mel Blanc, Cary. He was a great man who left us a legacy of great characters to work with (even if they're not ours!). We'll all miss him!

Dear Marvel,

Re: MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #32.

Fantastic cover. It was magnificent. It's no wonder Todd was voted most popular cover artist in the Comics Buyer's Guide awards. Now, if only you can requisition more from him for MCP.

The Excalibur story got a little better, mostly because it focused on Shadowcat and left the Loonies in the background. I'm not that fond of the Loonies as a concept, anyway.

The Black Panther story was good, and I was really glad to see a city environment. After seeing him run around in the bush and in small villages for over 20 issues, it was a welcome change of pace.

The Coldblood story was also good, but because the focus was shifted to Mako, it wasn't as interesting as the previous issues have been.

And as for the Sunfire story, I really wasn't interested. I thought the whole concept was stupid, and the fact that the villain turned his back on Sunfire, and enabled him to get back up and destroy his machine was really stupid. And the title, well, that began the entire ridiculousness of the story. It only got worse from there. And, of course, the major strike against this story from the beginning was the fact that it was only an eight page single-issue story! When are you people going to listen and stop printing these stupid stories?

Shane Hutchison
PO Box 580483
Nassau Bay, TX 77258

Boy, you've said some strong words, Shane, and we think you're not giving poor Scott Lobdell a chance. Just because you're biased against eight page stories, you pan Scott's latest writing effort. Right now, it seems that you are one of the few people who don't like our one-shot stories. Most people have no problems with them. In fact, they appreciate our efforts to spotlight lesser-used characters like Sunfire. We're sorry you don't like our format, but honestly, we don't plan to change it right now.

Dear Presenters,

I was very angry when I heard that Excalibur was going to be the lead feature in MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS. I thought that since these guys had their own comic, there was no reason for them to be featured here. But now that I've read the first few installments, I must say I've changed my mind. This serial is great.

Michael Higgins has provided us with some very humorous moments, but has still told a quite good adventure story. I really like his writing.

Erik Larsen's art is much better here than anywhere I've seen it. I always thought he was a good artist, but now he's elevated himself to new heights. I must also attribute it to the marvelous inking of Terry Austin.

I just wanted to write to tell you what a great story this is and what a fool I was for doubting you.

Andy Steele
(No address given)

...But, of course, we wouldn't call you a fool, Andy, but we don't know you as well as you know yourself .

Dear Guys,

I haven't written to a comic in a long time but there's just something I have to say -- more Coldblood.

This is the best story I've seen since the LONGSHOT LIMITED SERIES. Not just Mr. Gulacy's art, but the characterization too! Doug, this guy/machine is a winner.

This may sound strange, but I'm not requesting an unlimited series. Not that I'd complain about it, but it's just that I find that quality usually suffers when great talents are on a monthly deadline. I'd like to see more limited series and the like.

If Coldblood does continue, I hope Paul Gulacy stays with it. I love the dark tones, grim expressions, beautifully detailed machinery, background buildings and debris that give this series a movie-like feel.

If it's possible to have a "personality conflict" with a computer, I'd say that said conflict gave the comic relief needed without being corny. Doug Moench did a great job.

One last request, keep the car, I love it! It's sort of an Olds Aerotech with an attitude. I foresee at least one problem, though--where to get that 20mm Gatling ammo?

Well, I've babbled enough. Thanks for all the groovy issues so far, and keep 'em comin'. Till the Punisher drives a battle-Yugo, Make Mine Marvel.

B.D. Phillips
294 Portsmouth St.
Concord, NH 03301

We're glad you like Coldblood so much, B.D. It seems that a lot of people really like the character. As a matter of fact, we're already planning a COLDBLOOD Prestige Format Series for next year. And if you liked the action in the current series, you're going to love the new storyline!

Dear Presenters,

July's installments of MCP, issues #32 and 33 contained some quality storytelling while the back-up feature did its rendition of Jeckyll and Hyde. While I feel that many of your long time readers are beginning to tire of the steady diet of mutants, the Excalibur storyline is one of the best features to appear in this title. Something just the other side of serious is the one component that had been missing from this title. The story is especially poignant since we have lost one of the industry's greats, Mel Blanc. The timing of this storyline was impeccable, and I hope it will serve as a sort of tribute to Mel. Best of all was the panel layout. The two pages used as one layout which began completely in issue #32 and carried over into #33 gives this feature a feel all its own.

I think I will hold off commenting on both the Black Panther and the Coldblood storylines until they conclude. Suffice it to say that both stories are superb in their presentation.

As mentioned earlier, the real Jeckyll and Hyde stories were the back-up features. The Sunfire story was so ill-conceived that thoughts of "I could do better than that" ran through my head when I finished reading it. The Sub-Mariner story, on the other hand, serves as a testimonial to the genius of Don McGregor. In fact, McGregor is responsible for half of the stories in issue #33. Quite an accomplishment. The Lee/Ivy combination looked really good, too. Without a written or spoken word this story has managed to portray the glory and regality that is the Sub-Mariner, something that hasn't been done with the Sub-Mariner in a decade of stories.

Keep it up. This title is a good one and I will continue reading...and writing.

Charles S. Novinskie
PO Box 1323
Grand Junction, CO 81502

We'll try, Charles. Thanks...

HERCULES
THE CONCLUSION!
AND ONE
WILL FALL . . .
FREEDOM
FORCE
VS. THE
GRIP™
WONDER
MAN
VS.
IRON MAN!